

ELECTRONIC BALLAST SYSTEM FOR EMERGENCY LIGHTING APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

5 The present invention generally relates to an electronic ballast system for emergency lighting applications, and more particularly, to a compact single-stage electronic ballast circuit. The system integrates the features of battery charger/discharger and lamp ballast so as to reduce the fabrication cost and the number of switching elements.

2. Description of the Prior Art

10 To comply with regulation and safety requirements, emergency lighting equipment becomes indispensable. In the prior art of emergency lighting technique, researchers have presented several viable approaches to emergency lighting applications. There is, however, a common drawback of requiring a
15 complicated converter topology, which might result in the high cost and increasing number of switching elements. Accordingly, a single-stage system integrating plural power converters to reduce the fabrication cost has become a future research tendency.

20 Please refer to FIG. 1A, which is a commonly used circuit configuration for bi-direction flyback converter serving as either a charger or a discharger. FIG. 1B shows the normal configuration of a half-bridge series-resonant parallel-loaded inverter (SRPLI), in which $V_{c1} = V_{c2}$. For a practical emergency

lighting application, the battery voltage V_B in FIG. 1A is usually much lower than the rectified line voltage V_{dc} . Thus, to combine the bi-directional flyback converter with SRPLIs, it requires an additional transformer to boost up the battery voltage. The inverter of FIG. 1B also serves as an electronic ballast for lighting. A multi-stage power converter shown as FIG. 2 consists of a regular/emergency ballast 200 including S1 and S2, a bi-directional flyback converter 220 including S3 and S4 and a regular ballast 240 including S5 and S6. FIG. 2 shows the original inverter/charger/discharger converter that has not been modified. This invention will incorporate the multi-stage inverter/charger/discharger converter into a single-stage converter.

Applications of a multi-stage power converter shown in FIG. 2 are undermined due to the requirement of the increased number of switching elements. Such a multi-stage power converter employs a considerable amount of elements, which results in high fabrication cost. Furthermore, the overall power conversion efficiency may also decrease due to the multi-stage conversion. These drawbacks are unacceptable since the modern-day standards require the high efficiency and low cost. Therefore, efforts have been made to provide single-stage converters with multiple functions so as to overcome the foregoing problems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Therefore, the present invention has been made to solve such problems in view of the forgoing status and to further provide an electronic ballast system, which is a single-stage electronic ballast with emergency lighting

features. The electronic ballast system also includes a regular/emergency lamp set and a plural regular lamp set for lighting. The ballast can function as a regular ballast, a regular/emergency ballast, a battery charger or discharger, or a power failure detector, so as to fulfill emergency lighting features. The single-stage converter used in the ballast is an integration of a bi-directional flyback converter and two half-bridge series-resonant parallel-loaded inverters. Unlike conventional approaches, the rectified and filtered input voltage is directly added to the battery voltage in the proposed system of this invention, thereby reducing the fabrication cost and the number of active switching elements with the simplified circuit configuration.

In addition, this invention further includes a detector to differentiate the system saturation to simplify circuit design. The detector mainly includes a lamp switch to decide that all the lamps are on or off. There are three modes of system saturation shown as follow:

Mode I: The utility electricity is off, a regular/emergency lamp set is lighting by a set of batteries, and a plural regular lamp set is off.

Mode II: The utility electricity is normally on and the lamp switch is turned off, then all the lamps are off so that the regular/emergency lamp is off too.

Mode III: The utility electricity is normally on and the lamp switch is turned on, then all the lamps are on so that the regular/emergency lamp is on too.

Other and further features, advantages and benefits of this invention will

become apparent in the following description taken in conjunction with the following drawings. It is to be understood that the foregoing general description and following detailed description are exemplary and explanatory but are not to be restrictive of the invention. The accompanying drawings are
5 incorporated in and constitute a part of this application and, together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention in general terms. Like numerals refer to like parts throughout the disclosure.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The objects, spirits and advantages of the preferred embodiment of the
10 present invention will be readily understood by the accompanying drawings and detailed descriptions, wherein:

FIG. 1A is a circuit configuration of a conventional bi-direction flyback converter in the prior art;

FIG. 1B is a circuit configuration of a conventional half-bridge series
15 resonant parallel-loaded electronic ballast in the prior art;

FIG. 2 is a circuit configuration of electronic ballast for emergency lighting applications in the prior art;

FIG. 3A is a functional block diagram in accordance with the preferred embodiment of the present invention;

20 FIG. 3B is a detailed connection of LC network lamp (LCNL) in accordance with FIG. 3A of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a circuit configuration derived from FIG. 2 integrating the bi-direction flyback converter and the regular/emergency ballast;

FIG. 5 is a circuit configuration derived from FIG. 4 to further integrate the regular ballast in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is a circuit configuration in accordance with the second embodiment of the present invention; and

FIG. 7 is a circuit configuration diagram of another embodiment in accordance with the present invention.

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DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention discloses a single-stage system that integrates a bi-direction flyback converter, a regular ballast inverter and a regular/emergency ballast inverter.

Please refer to FIG. 3A, which is a functional block diagram of a single-stage electronic ballast system of this invention for emergency lighting applications. As shown in FIG. 3A, an integrated single-stage inverter/charger/discharger converter 20, a microcontroller 30, and four LC networks with lamps (LCNLs) are provided. FIG. 3B shows a schematic diagram of LCNL consisted of an inductor L_r , a lamp and a capacitor C_r . The inductor L_r is connected to the lamp in series. The capacitor C_r is coupled to the lamp in parallel. In FIG. 3A, the four LC networks with lamps include the regular lighting 40 and the emergency lighting 42. According to FIG. 2, the

LCNL1 is consisted of the inductor L_{r1} , the lamp1 and the capacitor C_{r1} . The LCNL2 is consisted of the inductor L_{r2} , the lamp2 and the capacitor C_{r2} . The LCNL3 is consisted of the inductor L_{r3} , the lamp3 and the capacitor C_{r3} . Further, the LCNL4 is consisted of the inductor L_{r4} , the lamp4 and the capacitor C_{r4} . In this specification, one LCNL is named as a lamp set, so that the LCNL1-3 is named as a plural regular lamp set 403, as the LCNL4 is named as a regular/emergency lamp set 420 (shown in FIG. 4).

The single-stage ballast system is relatively suitable for regular and emergency lighting applications in offices. The V_{ac} is the utility power, such as the AC power source, coupled to a bridge rectifier 10, then outputs the input power source V_{dc} to the single-stage converter 20. The input power source V_{dc} is further in series connected to a storage voltage source V_B . The storage voltage source V_B is a set of battery connection for power supply storage. When V_{ac} is off, and therefore V_{dc} is off too, the storage voltage source V_B provides the power for the single-stage converter 20. When V_{ac} is normally on, the storage voltage source V_B is charged by V_{ac} through the single-stage converter 20 driving.

The single-stage converter 20 can function as a regular ballast, a regular/emergency ballast, a battery charger or discharger, or a power failure detector. When utility power V_{ac} supplies normally, the single-stage converter 20 will function as a charger and regular ballast to have the four lamps for regular lighting. On the contrary, when utility power V_{ac} fails to do so, the battery voltage is boosted by the discharger to a voltage level equivalent to the rectified one. Thus, the electronic ballast achieves the emergency lighting 42

function to turn on one lamp. The microcontroller 30 can differentiate power failure from regular supply to switch operation modes. In practice, the microcontroller 30 is preferably a chip of EM78P458.

The proposed single-stage converter 20 of this invention is derived by
5 integrating a bi-directional flyback converter and two half-bridge series-resonant parallel-loaded inverters (SRPLIs). Derivation of the single-stage converter 20 is illustrated in FIG. 4 that is a circuit configuration derived from FIG. 2 and integrates the bi-direction flyback converter 220 and the regular/emergency ballast 200 therein. At first, analyzing the converter
10 shown in FIG. 2 reveals that switches S_1 and S_3 can be operated synchronously and so do switches S_2 and S_4 . By applying the synchronous switch technique, the flyback converter 220 and the SRPLI 200 shown in FIG. 2 can be integrated into the regular/emergency & bi-direction flyback converter 222, as shown in FIG. 4. That is, the switches S_1 and S_3 are integrated into a switch S_{13} and the
15 switches S_2 and S_4 are integrated into a switch S_{24} . The switch S_{24} is also to be the second switch of FIG. 5. Similarly, the integrated switch S_{13} and switch S_5 of FIG. 4 can be operated synchronously and can be integrated to a third switch S_{135} shown in FIG. 5. Although the second switch S_{24} and the first switch S_6 can be integrated to a single one, they are left separately for reducing
20 conduction losses. Thus, the proposed converter topology of the electronic ballast system of this invention becomes the one illustrated in FIG. 5.

FIG. 5 is a circuit configuration derived from FIG. 4 further integrating the regular ballast 240 with the regular/emergency and bi-direction flyback converter 222 in accordance with the first embodiment of the present invention.

The embodiment in FIG. 5 includes an input power source V_{dc} to provide the electronic ballast system with the power required. The input power source is connected to a storage voltage source V_B in series. The storage voltage source V_B is consisted of a set of batteries for having the power stored. One end of the storage voltage source V_B is connected to ground. Capacitor C_1 and C_2 are connected in series. One end of the capacitor C_1 is connected to the input power source V_{dc} and one end of capacitor C_2 is connected to the ground. The in-series connected capacitors C_1 and C_2 are necessary elements for SRPLI topology shown as FIG. 1B.

Moreover, FIG. 5 includes a plural regular lamp set 403 for regular lighting and a regular/emergency lamp set 420 for regular/emergency lighting. The plural regular lamp set 403 is connected to capacitors C_1 and C_2 . The regular/emergency lamp set 403 is further connected to the input power source V_{dc} and the storage voltage source V_B . It is obviously different from FIG. 2 that the circuit configuration of FIG. 5 only includes three switching elements, namely the first switch S_6 , the second switch S_{24} , and the third switch S_{135} . One end (source or drain) of the first switch S_6 is coupled to the plural regular lamp set and the other end (drain or source) is connected to the ground. One end (drain or source) of the second switch S_{24} is connected to the ground, and the other end (source or drain) is connected to a transformer T_{12} . One end (drain or source) of the third switch S_{135} is coupled to the regular/emergency lamp set 420 and the other end (source or drain) is coupled to the input power source V_{dc} .

The transformer T_{12} is derived from the transformer T_1 and T_2 shown

in FIG. 2. The transformer T12 has a primary coil coupled to the regular/emergency lamp set 420 and a secondary coil coupled to the second switch S_{24} . In addition, one end of the primary coil is connected to the secondary coil and the connection point between the input power source V_{dc} and the storage voltage source VB. There is a forward diode DF1 and a backward diode DB1 installed in FIG. 5. The forward diode DF1 is employed for rectifying function. One end of DF1 is coupled to the input power source V_{dc} , the other end thereof is coupled to the plural regular lamp set 403 with the first switch S_6 . The backward diode DB1 is for the function of rectifying too.
One end of DB1 is coupled to the first switch S_6 and the other end is coupled to the third switch S_{135} .

As mentioned above, the first switch S_6 serves as one switch element of regular ballast for the plural regular lamp set 403. The second switch S_{24} possesses a regular/emergency ballast switch function and a bi-directional flyback converter switch function simultaneously. The third switch S_{135} is to integrate functions of regular/emergency ballast, bi-directional flyback converter and regular ballast at the same time. Normally, the transformer T12 functions as the energy transmission of a bi-directional flyback converter.

It is much of importance to discuss the operating principles of FIG. 5 in according with this invention. The integrated single-stage converter shown in FIG. 5 consists of a flyback semi-stage and two SRPLI semi-stages, in which the flyback semi-stage is operated in the continuous conduction mode and functions as a battery charger or discharger. The half-bridge SRPLI semi-stages are operated above their resonances to drive fluorescent lamps. The converter is

operated in two modes, namely the line mode (using the utility power) and the battery mode (using the battery power). In the situation of the line mode, the battery is charged and four lamps are driven by the line source, while in the battery mode, the battery is discharged to supply the single lamp (Lamp4). The transition between these two modes is automatic and instantaneous. This integrated converter is relatively suitable for regular and emergency lighting applications and very cost effective.

When the input power source V_{dc} normally works, a flyback charger is formed by the third switch S_{135} with the transformer T12. In addition, a regular half-bridge series resonant parallel-loaded electronic ballast is also formed by the first switch S_6 with the third switch S_{135} and coupled to the plural regular lamp set403. Further, another regular half-bridge series resonant parallel-loaded electronic ballast is also formed by the second switch S_{24} with the third switch S_{135} and coupled to the regular/emergency lamp set 420 also.

When the input power source V_{dc} fails to work normally, the first switch S_6 is disabled instantly and automatically due to the connection with the forward diode DF1 and the backward diode DB1. Meanwhile, a flyback discharger is formed due to the connection of the storage voltage source VB with the transformer T12 and the second switch S_{24} . Further, an emergency half-bridge series resonant parallel-loaded electronic ballast is formed due to the connection of the second switch S_{24} with the third switch S_{135} coupled to the regular/emergency lamp set 420. The power source of the present emergency electronic ballast is from the storage voltage source VB.

It is worth pointing out that under normal line supply, the converter functions as a regular electronic ballast, and while the power source fails to work normally, the converter will instantly disable the driving signal of switch S_6 without an additional relay and automatically switch to battery mode without
5 any delay.

The second embodiment of the present invention is shown as FIG. 6. Comparing with FIG. 5, a detector 50 is installed additionally in FIG. 6 for deciding the plural regular lamp set 403 and/or the regular/emergency lamp set 420 lighting or not. Because the detector 50 needs to connect with AC power
10 source, the utility AC power source Vac and the bridge rectifier 10 are drawn again in FIG. 6 to show the connection with the detector 50. The detector 50 includes a lamp switch 52 coupled to one line of utility AC power source Vac in series connection. There is also an output capacitor Co installed in the
15 detector 50. One end of the capacitor Co is coupled to the lamp switch 52 via a diode Do+ and the other end thereof is coupled to the utility power source via a diode Do-. The voltage of the output capacitor Co is the detective voltage V. In practice, the lamp switch 52 is preferably a popularly-used neon lamp switch.

On the other hand, if no neon lamp switch is employed, resistor with a high resistance parallel connected to an ordinary power source switch is
20 employed. To detect the voltage behind the ordinary power source switch, the method using the high resistance resistor enables the detection of the electronic ballast system saturation of this invention.

The detector 50 is used to differentiate the single-stage system saturation

so as to simplify the whole circuit design. There are three modes of system saturation shown as follow:

Mode I: The utility power supply is off, the regular/emergency lamp 4 is lighting by the set of battery power source VB. The regular lamps (lamp1-3) are off not matter the lamp switch 52 is on or off. The detective voltage is V1.

Mode II: The utility power supply is normally on and the lamp switch is turned off, then all the four lamps are off so that the regular/emergency lamp 4 is off too. The detective voltage is V2.

Mode III: The utility power supply is normally on and the lamp switch is turned on, then all the four lamps are on so that the regular/emergency lamp4 is on too. The detective voltage is V3.

The detective voltage V will be transmitted to the microcontroller 30, then the microcontroller 30 detects and acknowledges the mode of system saturation to drive the relative switches operated in corresponding modes. The advantages of the second embodiment are simplifying the circuit connection and detecting, and further replacing the ordinary power source switch by the neon lamp switch but having no in-connection load provided.

Please refer to FIG. 7 of a third embodiment of the present invention. The third embodiment 500 as well includes a plural regular lamp set 510 and a regular/emergency lamp set 520. As the utility power source supplies normally to this circuit 500, switches S_{24} , S_{135} and S_6 turn on so as to have all lamps

including Lamp 1 to Lamp 4 turn on, as S_6 and S_{24} are operated simultaneously; rather, while supply of the utility power source is not as normal, only switches S_{24} and S_{135} are turned on and, in the meanwhile, the switch S_6 is off, leading to having only one lamp (emergency lamp—Lamp 4) turned on. FIG. 7 only
5 provides another embodiment according to the present invention, thus the connection relationships between elements, such as the regular lamp set 510, regular/emergency lamp set 520, switches S_{24} , S_{135} and S_6 and transformer T12 are omitted from this paragraph.

According to the above discussion, the present invention discloses an
10 integrated single-stage electronic ballast system for emergency lighting applications, having the features of battery charging, discharging and regular/emergency ballast, so as to reduce the fabrication cost by simplifying the circuit configuration and reducing the number of employed active switching elements. Further, this invention has been examined to be progressive,
15 advantageous and applicable to the industry.

Although this invention has been disclosed and illustrated with reference to particular embodiments, the principles involved are susceptible for use in numerous other embodiments that will be apparent to persons skilled in the art. This invention is, therefore, to be limited only as indicated by the scope of the
20 appended claims.